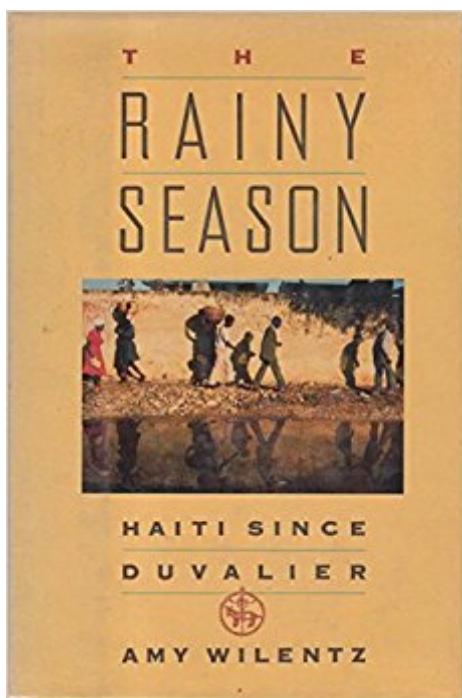


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# The Rainy Season: Haiti Since Duvalier



## **Synopsis**

In the tradition of Joan Didion and Paul Theroux, this highly acclaimed writer/reporter offers a vivid portrait of today's Haiti--where during the day the streets are filled with bustling markets while at night they are filled with gunfire. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

In 1986, Jean-Claude "Baby Doc" Duvalier, Haiti's "president-for-life," was forced to flee his country. A military junta had seized power, and the widespread feeling of unrest that had been brewing for years among the Haitian peasantry and the urban poor came to a boil, resulting in chaos: mass strikes, riots and other forms of violence. Wilentz's first book carefully, sensitively narrates these events in the first person, providing historical background when necessary, and telling the stories of Haitians from all walks of life, from the infamous "Tontons Macoute"--a ruthless government-sponsored vigilante group--to voodoo priests (who speak at length of their magic), and including government officials, missionaries, intellectuals, workers and the unemployed. The former *Time* reporter's numerous visits to the island between 1986 and 1988 enrich her account with details of daily life, both in the dilapidated alleys and slums of Port-au-Prince and in remote villages tucked away in lush tropical mountains. Her vivid record of an important piece of contemporary world history captures the sad political and quotidian existence of an impoverished albeit physically beautiful country. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This welcome interpretation of Haiti provides many insights into a country that few North Americans

understand. Wilentz, a journalist, captures the complex cultural ambience and mystery of domestic politics with a penetrating eye and powerful description. Covering the years 1986-89, Wilentz analyzes political developments, centering her interpretations on the activities of a radical priest, interspersed with individual Haitian portraits and personal incidents. The flavor of Haiti is superbly conveyed, as are some unsavory aspects of the role of the press, the Catholic Church, and the U.S. embassy, but Wilentz's narrative is often unclear and her objectivity flawed. For academic and large public libraries.- Roderic A. Camp, Central Coll., Pella, Ia .Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I would rec. this book to folks who have not visited Haiti yet. I loved it. Wonder how she supported herself. Did she eat out every nite? Did she go there to expressly get info as she knew she was writing a book.

I'm fascinated with Haitian history and believe the author has done a remarkable job in presenting it in a lively engaging manner.

Ms. Wilentz has created a fascinating account of life and politics in this turbulent country. Definitely worth reading even for those with no particular interest in Haiti.

Have to agree with the 3 star review that the author is a biased journalist. While the author provides an interesting insight into Haiti, she is no expert. The author takes sides telling us how wonderful Aristide is, before he became president. Like the other reviewer stated Aristide was seen as a demon by many Haitians. This book is set during a certain time period in Haiti so from this view point it can provide valuable insight taken with a grain of salt. Still even with the bias it is a great read for someone interested in Haiti.

If you are trying to figure out the muddle that is Haitian political history, this book can help. Covering Haiti from the fall of Baby Doc until early 1989, Willentz gives a close-up look at the parade of dictators and terrorists running the (in theory) post-Duvalier country. She also provides a personal connection to Aristide, then a radical priest continually in hiding from a government wishing to silence him. In addition to the internal political movements and terrorism, Willentz shows us the ties between Haiti's troubles and the United States. If you are not familiar with American policy in regard to Haiti, you will be in for a disappointing and infuriating surprise. We sucked! The book also covers

the standards to be found in every book on Haiti: voodoo, illiteracy, slave revolution rememberings, hunger, poverty, exploitation, class and racial imbalances. Perhaps its greatest asset is the datedness of the text. Written after Duvalier and before Aristide, the view of both is fairly unbiased. If you want to learn more about Haiti's past, present and future, you should check this one out.

In *The Rainy Season*, Wilentz leads the reader through the world of Haiti and its people, both those who are corrupt and those who struggle each day against corruption. I will visit Haiti for the 6th time this summer but I have not previously read anything in-depth about Haitian history. This book opened my eyes to essential information that every traveller to Haiti should be aware of, out of respect to the violent history of Haiti and the people who have survived through it. No one should attempt to "help" the Haitian people without first understanding the results of "help" already rendered in the past. Wilentz makes these (often tragic) results clear, and humbles all of us in the process. If you have gone to Haiti, or will go to Haiti, whether as a missionary, journalist, diplomat, or foreign aid worker, don't go ignorant. Read *The Rainy Season* (and more recent publications as well) first.

This book is great reading and provides a lot of insight into Haiti. **HOWEVER**, Ms Wilentz is a biased journalist. One does not become an expert about something just by visiting and interviewing a few folks here and there. I lived and worked in Haiti for 9 years in a couple of small southern towns. I have come to know the customs and the people. Not all are in agreement with Aristide, who was seen as a demon by many of the Haitians, and rightly so. He was no different than the other dictators who came before him. One example, he advocated "necklacing" of those who disagreed with him. Wilentz also thinks voodoo is just great. She hasn't lived with the people who have been threatened, exploited, and killed by those who practice this religion. It is not benign, but evokes fear in those who dare to stand against it. Aristide is also a voodooist who used the dark magic to scare those against him. So again, it is a great read, but it isn't the "gospel truth" on all things Haitian. It is her viewpoint on the things she has had contact with. It is not an unbiased work, nor extensive. It must be read with those things in mind. It is a great read, well-written, but biased.

Amy Wilentz is the best kind of journalist: a great writer, but also a person who spent the time--often in courageous circumstances--to know her subjects deeply. Her portraits of the people she met and events she experienced in Haiti, along with her lively dissertations on Haiti's history, are vivid and poignant. Her images have embedded themselves in my mind and haunted my dreams.

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